

Hawks 'Optimistic' About Season

With only nine starters returning to the lineup, the North Buncombe Black Hawks will feature many new faces when they kickoff the 1988 season Friday night against the Madison High Patriots at Reeves Stadium.

Led by their new head coach, Tom McIntyre, the Black Hawks are looking to improve following back-to-back 1-9 seasons.

The Hawks' new head coach, a veteran of 30 years coaching in South Carolina, has installed new offense and defense formations for the young Black Hawks.

With 12 juniors and eight sophomores on the roster, the Black Hawks will be short on experience as they open the season, but McIntyre hopes to be building for the future with the underclassmen.

The Hawk offense will be directed by a sophomore, Allen Fisher, who transferred from Madison High School during the summer.

Until his departure, the 5'11" sophomore had figured in the Patriots' plans for 1988 and beyond. Fisher's father, John, is the Black Hawks' defensive coordinator.

Backing up Fisher at quarterback will be another sophomore, Stuart Saye. Both young quarterbacks saw action Friday night in a pre-season scrimmage with Mountain Heritage.

Although lacking an experienced passer, the Black Hawks backfield will feature seniors Scott Whitt, Darren Fender and Joey Davis.

Whitt, a 5'11", 160-pound senior,

will see action on both offense and defense, doubling as the Hawks' tailback and free safety. McIntyre regards Whitt as a college prospect at free safety.

Davis, a 5'10", 170-pound senior, will also see double duty as the Black Hawks fullback and linebacker.

The new head coach is counting on a trio of wide receivers to spark the the Black Hawk passing game in 1988.

Among the receivers who will see action are Eric Haynes, a 5'9", 137-pound senior; Wally Ponder, a 6'1", 160-pound senior who transferred from Mitchell County High School and David Hensley, a 5'8", 145-pound senior.

"Haynes and Hensley are like two peas in a pod," McIntyre says. "They both have great hands."

Senior Keith Briggs and junior Ted Farmer will share duties in the tight end slot.

The 1988 Black Hawks can boast a wealth of experience up front, with four returning lettermen anchoring both the offensive and defensive front lines.

Seniors Blake Allen, Michell Fisher, Scott Wilson and Lance Stewart will provide North Buncombe with a seasoned front four this fall. McIntyre describes Fisher as a "big kid with a world of ability," but says the 6'2" 213-pound senior is sometimes "not as aggressive as he needs to be."

The Hawks will also be counting on seniors Lee Pack and Keith Briggs this season. Briggs will see action as a linebacker this fall.

McIntyre says Briggs "can run with any back that we've got."

Rounding out the 1988 Black Hawks roster are seniors Ernie Rice, Bryan Ward, Darrell Martin, Eddie Roberts and Barry Jarrett; juniors Chad Morrow, Anthony Angelo, David Cody, Brian Gwaltney, Mike Hunnicutt, Kenny Jeffries, Ken Hipps, Jason Ponder, Alan Kuykendall, Brent Teague and Dwight Patton; and sophomores Scott Fisher, Floyd Ledford, Eric Whitson, Grayson Bell, Chris Nix and Clayton Casteel.

Nick Tasios, a 5'9", 185-pound freshman, is the only ninth-grader on the Black Hawks' varsity.

The Black Hawks' lack of experience could cause some early season problems, but their new head coach is prepared to be patient.

"We want to improve week by week and sow the seeds of success. We'd like to start a winning tradition that the school and community can be proud of," McIntyre said Monday.

Friday's season opener against the equally young Madison

Patriots should provide area fans their first glimpse at two teams building for the future.

The season opener between the Black Hawks and Patriots always provides an extra element of excitement and the rivalry between the two local teams promises to be heated once again Friday night as the Patriot defense attempts to thwart their former teammate, Allen Fisher. With his former classmates in pursuit, the Hawks' young passer faces additional pressure as he makes his varsity debut.

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